

## Rep. Jill Billings Delivers Speech on Right to Work

*Right to Work speech is Billings' first of the 2015-2016 legislative session.*

MADISON – Today, the Assembly began debate in Extraordinary Session on the controversial “Right to Work” legislation, Senate Bill 44. Representative Jill Billings (D- La Crosse) made a statement on the Assembly floor calling for the rejection of the Right to Work proposal.

In her speech, Rep. Billings spoke on concerns of constituents in the 95<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, as well as significant findings in comparisons between Right to Work and pro-worker states.

“I met my people from the La Crosse area – workers who traveled here [Madison] on their own time and came to testify respectfully in front of the committee. I shook their hands like politicians do, and there’s strength in those hands that work so hard to provide for their families. To them this is their livelihood. This is being able to provide for their families and economic opportunity for them that they’ve worked so hard for.”

“I remember a gentleman who spoke in front of the Senate who spoke about how the union gave him direction and a career, not just a job. He said could not understand why government was inserting itself into that respectful bargain that he had made with his employer. He was concerned about his wages falling. And I believe, if we pass Right to Work, his wages will fall—and non-union member wages will fall.

“But for a clearer comparison, we look to one of our neighbors – Minnesota. Minnesota’s jobless rate was 3.7 percent, while Wisconsin’s was 5.2. Forbes ranked Minnesota as the 9<sup>th</sup> best state for business, 7<sup>th</sup> in economic climate, and 2<sup>nd</sup> in quality of life. Wisconsin ranked 32, 27, and 17 on the same measures. Minnesota is able to invest in education, care for seniors, and set aside for a rainy day fund, while we’re on a roller coaster that leaves us taking from our vital programs. It comes as no surprise that Minnesota is not a Right to Work state.

“I was speaking with a friend the other day who served as an attorney for management. And he said to me, ‘Right to Work unnecessarily inserts legislators in a system where for over 70 years labor and management meet, and negotiate in good faith. And it’s working.’

“It’s worked for Wisconsin workers, Wisconsin’s economy, and Wisconsin businesses.”

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